

Community Development Framework: Theory of Change

(For use by schools and communities in planning
for truancy and dropout prevention and intervention)

The **Theory of Change** method is used to plan and evaluate a project. Theory of Change is particularly applicable when:

- Issues of concern are complex, multi-faceted and involve many partners;
- Change effort is comprehensive and system wide; and
- Desired outcomes are recognized as requiring long-term sustained work and interim signs of success are needed to make sure the work is on the right course.

These attributes are consistent with the underlying assumptions of the Consortium's work in Vermont.

A Theory of Change expresses the beliefs about the *activities, programs, and strategies* needed to make progress on the identified *outcomes* (initial, intermediate, and long-term). Those activities, programs, and strategies reflect *assumptions* about what it will take to make a difference.

For example, a group may choose *mentoring* because they believe that having a strong positive relationship with an adult is critical to students' success in school.

Or, they may teach *non-violent techniques for resolving conflicts* because they believe that youth use violence because they don't know other ways to respond.

Or, they may focus on *changing how key players in the "system" relate to each other*, because they believe that systems-change is essential for changing outcomes for youth.

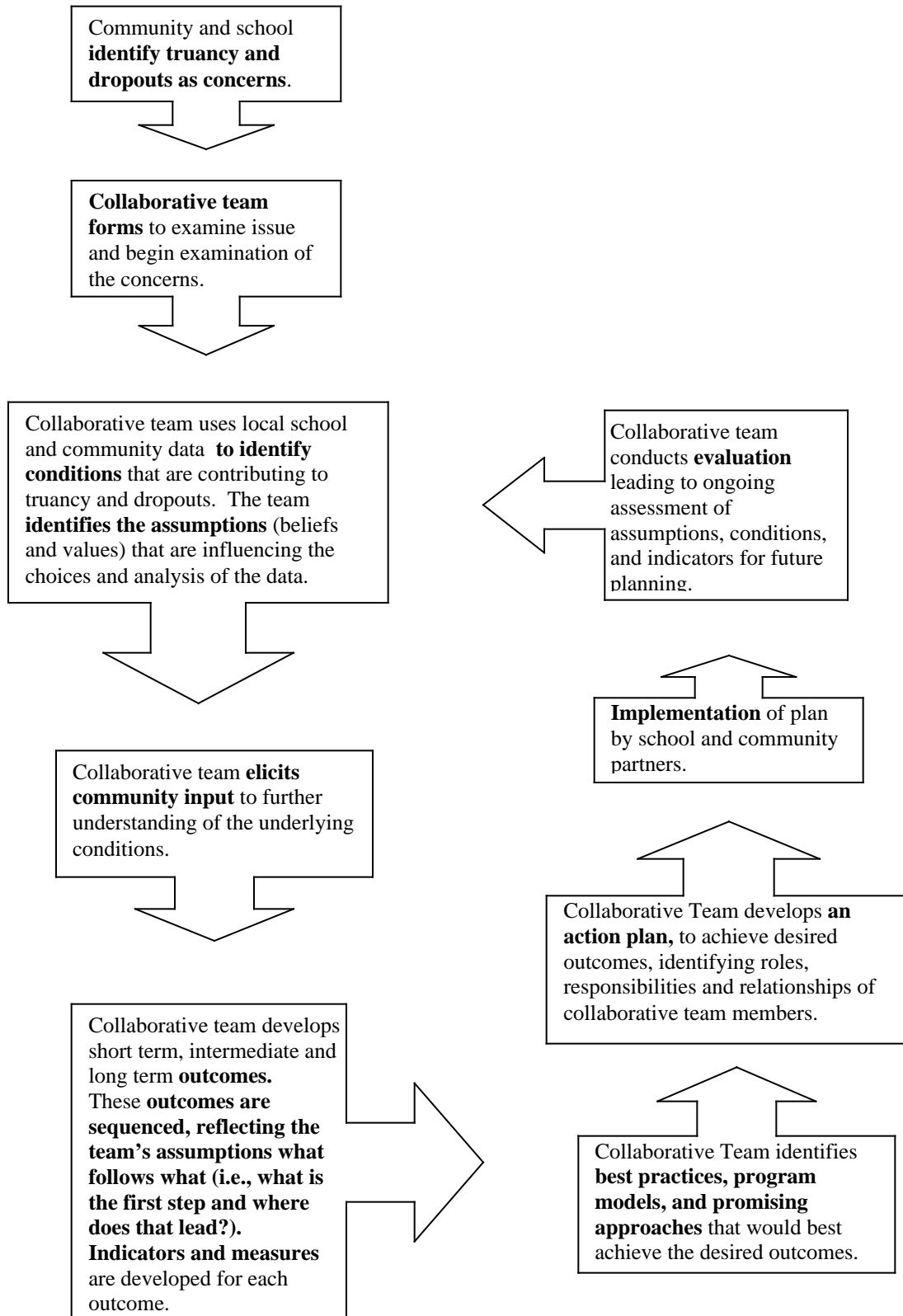
For some outcomes, all these approaches may be linked together into a Theory of Change. The assumptions can be "taken for granted" and not really looked at; or they can be made very clear and open to discussion. However, once the assumptions are put out for all to see, we can *test* those assumptions by systematically collecting information (data). Then, based on what has been learned, the Theory of Change can be revised.

Theory of Change is reflected in the Indicators and the Community Development Framework. The indicators are designed to guide and evaluate the system change needed to support all students' successful completion of high school. They may be used as an initial assessment of a school and community's readiness for change as well as ongoing evaluation of progress. The indicators chart system change in key areas: partnerships; capacity for collaboration; planning; youth engagement; leadership; community engagement; and school structure. The indicators are best used by a collaborative group that has chosen to focus on specific issues such as school truancy and dropouts. (NOTE: The [Brattleboro community task force on truancy and drop out prevention](#) is an example of a comprehensive Theory of Change that guides their ongoing work. Click the link to view the document as a PDF file.)

Schools and communities may request facilitation from the Consortium in their use of the indicators and in their planning process. Programs and individuals that use the indicators and community development framework are asked to complete the Feedback Form and return it to the Consortium for their continued work and development in this area.

Community Development Framework For Truancy and Dropout Prevention

Theory of Change Planning Guide used with the Community Development Indicators**



Community Development Framework : Indicators of Community/School Readiness

School/Community_____

Completed by_____Date_____Phone/email_____

Recognition (R) of the problems of truancy and school dropouts and Leadership (L) around the issues by: (Indicate *recognition* with an R and *active leadership* with an L)

Comments

___Superintendent
___School Administration
___School Boards/SU
___School Boards/HS
___School Boards/Elementary

Comments

___Community partners
___Civic leaders/Business
___Parents
___Students
___School faculty and staff

Broad based collaborative workgroup formed to look at the issues with representation from: (check groups represented)

Comments

___Students – broad spectrum
___Out of school youth
___Parents
Education ___Early Education ___Middle School
 ___Elem Education ___Voc/tech
 ___High School ___Alternative
 ___Spec. Ed
Educators ___Admin ___Faculty/staff
 ___Health ___Guidance
___Youth employment programs
___Adult Literacy and Education
___Higher education
___School Board
___Vocational Rehabilitation

Comments

___Corrections/Probation and Parole
___Diversion/reparative justice programs
___Courts/Judges
___Local law enforcement
___Youth/family service organizations
___Teen health providers
___Parent Child Center
___Mental Health
___Social Services
___Local community, including businesses
___Regional partnership
___Substance Abuse Treatment/Prevention
___Funding organizations
___Other

Development of Collaborative Workgroup

Please respond to the following statements with YES (this is true); W (this is actively being worked on); or NO (not true)

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| YES / W / NO | Collaborative group has a stated vision and mission for its work.
Comments: |
| YES / W / NO | Collaborative group has a clear and articulated governance structure and decision-making process.
Comments: |
| YES / W / NO | Collaborative group has identified and is well versed in a planning model that focuses on the conditions/root causes versus symptoms of the identified issues
Comments: |
| YES / W / NO | Research based strategies and promising approaches that relate to the identified conditions and desired outcomes are identified.
Comments: |
| YES / W / NO | The collaborative group broadens its membership as different issues are addressed.
Comments: |
| YES / W / NO | The collaborative group links effectively with other initiatives, groups and organizations that are working with and on the behalf of youth and education.
Comments: |
| YES / W / NO | Collaborative group has resources to support its work.
Comments: |
| YES / W / NO | Members in the collaborative contribute to support the group's work, financially or in-kind.
Comments: |
| YES / W / NO | Community involvement is encouraged through forums, Study Circles, focus groups, invitations to meetings, sub-committees, and communication of group's work through local and school newspapers, newsletters and media.
Comments: |
| YES / W / NO | Collaborative has a paid coordinator or utilizes an outside facilitator or intermediary.
Comments: |

SCHOOL & COMMUNITY INDICATORS
FOR THE ONGOING ASSESSMENT OF TRUANCY & DROPOUT PREVENTION
Leadership Planning Youth Engagement Community Engagement School Structure

Please place a check in the box following each statement below that most closely represents your perception of each item in your school and community. Use the key below to guide your choices.

Date of Completion: _____ School / Community: _____

Role/Position _____ Name(optional) _____

Column #	Key to Your Responses
1	This indicator is not represented in current practices.
2	The community and school are learning more about this indicator through data and are examining current practices and research based models.
3	The community and school have developed a strategy to address this indicator.
4	The community and school are implementing strategies to address this indicator.
5	The community and school are continually examining outcomes related to this indicator and refining plans to increase outcomes.

LEADERSHIP	1	2	3	4	5
1. Superintendents, school principals, and civic leaders <u>bring current information</u> to the school board, school faculty and staff, students, parents, community partners, and community at large about the nature and scope of the truancy and dropout problem and the need for action.					
2. School and community leaders <u>support and participate</u> in local collaborative efforts for school success.					
3. Available pre -K – 12 plus post secondary school and community <u>data and reports are shared</u> with all school personnel, with school boards, students, parents, community leaders and members at large.					
4. <u>Qualitative and quantitative data</u> about the truancy and drop out problem, such as summary statements from exit interviews with students who leave school, and focus groups are <u>available</u> in an appropriate manner.					

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<u>LEADERSHIP continued</u>	1	2	3	4	5
5. <u>Discussions with all partners are held</u> to determine the significance of the data.					
6. School leaders advocate for an array of school and community <u>services and opportunities</u> , including prevention, early identification and support, and extensive support, are <u>available</u> to students and their families.					
7. <u>Partnerships</u> between educational providers are developed to <u>support options</u> for students					
8. School and district leadership takes initiative in developing and changing procedures and policies as needed to support truancy and drop out prevention efforts.					
9. <i>Write here what you would add?</i>					

PLANNING	1	2	3	4	5
1. There is a <u>Vision of student success</u> – skills, knowledge and attitudes that students need to have when they graduate from high school to be successful in college, employment, or training – that has been <u>collaboratively created</u> by school and community.					
2. Truancy and dropout prevention <u>efforts are coordinated</u> with other educational and youth initiatives; these initiatives are <u>represented in planning</u> or there is <u>regular updating</u> about each other's work; <u>joint efforts</u> are undertaken whenever possible.					
3. Truancy and dropout prevention is <u>connected directly to other K-12 school improvement plans</u> and activities. Programs and activities are aligned with the school's Action Plan and with existing community youth service plans					
4. Selection of programs and activities is <u>related to identified conditions</u> , existing <u>resources</u> , and <u>gaps</u> in services, <u>with clear outcomes and measures</u> .					
5. System program design and decision-making are <u>informed by available data</u> and ongoing evaluation.					
6. Outcomes and success <u>indicators are established collaboratively</u> with a broad range of partners and constituencies in the school and the community.					
7. <i>Write here what you would add?</i>					

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YOUTH ENGAGEMENT	1	2	3	4	5
1. <u>Young people are involved in all aspects</u> of truancy and dropout prevention planning including leadership and decision-making.					
2. <u>Youth representation includes</u> students at <u>risk of truancy</u> and <u>dropout</u> , out of school youth, student <u>leaders</u> , students in <u>alternative educational</u> programs, and students who are in the <u>regular school</u> program.					
3. <u>Youth are invited to partner with adults</u> to plan and carry out meetings; are invited to training events for skill development; and are visible participants and leaders in all aspects of the task force work.					
4. <u>Adult-youth relationships</u> are encouraged through opportunities such as teacher advisories and mentoring. Adults are provided training, supervision and support for these roles.					
5. <u>Youth</u> are given opportunities to <u>mentor or tutor younger students</u> through structured supervised programs. Youth receive <u>training for these roles</u> .					
6. <u>Youth civic engagement is recognized</u> as a critical component of education. School time, structure and academic credit support youth engagement in changing things that matter to them in their schools and communities.					
7. <i>Write here what you would add?</i>					

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	1	2	3	4	5
1. The <u>community actively supports education for all</u> children and youth. This is evident through participation in committees and forums; participation in apprenticeship, service learning, and mentoring programs; active participation in the schools (parent and/or volunteer); support of the financial needs of the schools through budget processes and fundraising efforts to provide the scope of programs needed for student success.					
2. <u>Community members value</u> the contributions of youth, <u>believe</u> in their worth, <u>provide</u> opportunities and resources for them, and provide opportunities for youth engagement and decision making and leadership, specifically in issues related to young people, but also in other civic concerns.					
3. Community members and organizations have information about and an opportunity to discuss the <u>impact of local and global economic and social impacts on local education</u> .					
4. <i>Write here what you would add?</i>					

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SCHOOL STRUCTURE	1	2	3	4	5
1. There are <u>articulation agreements between schools and community partners</u> to provide multiple pathways and flexible schedules for all students; for career awareness and development; to meet students' personal health and social needs; and to inform and support the educational process.					
2. <u>Attendance and discipline policies, protocols, and procedures identify</u> students who are <u>at risk</u> , <u>provide opportunities</u> for students to <u>stay engaged</u> in their education, and are <u>supportive and reparative</u> in nature.					
3. A <u>reparative approach to discipline</u> is used that holds students accountable for their actions while engaging them in addressing the conditions that contributed to the discipline problem.					
4. <u>Students, parents and faculty/staff have input</u> in the review and development of school programs and initiatives.					
5. There is <u>mutual respect between all members of the school community</u> , the school is safe for everyone, and all feel welcome at any time.					
6. Faculty and staff have time and support, including professional development where indicated, to <u>collaboratively examine and discuss</u> student work, student data, teaching, and school wide practices and procedures <i>for the purpose of improving student learning</i> .					
7. <u>Best practices</u> in student learning and performance, learning environments, policy, funding and governance, youth engagement, and parent and community involvement <u>are promoted, implemented, and evaluated school wide</u> .					
8. School policies and procedures support <u>credit earning community based learning</u> including internships, apprenticeships, coop programs, service learning, independent study and community service.					
9. There is <u>connection and continuity between grade levels in planning</u> for student success. Transitions between grades, particularly between school levels, are supported academically and socially.					
10. <u>Academic and career planning and preparation are provided</u> for all students.					
11. <i>Write here what you would add?</i>					

Community Development Framework : Indicators Use and Feedback Form

Date _____
Person completing this form _____
Title _____ **Organization** _____
Address _____
Phone/Fax _____ **E-mail** _____

May we contact you at this address for additional comments? Yes / No

What is the nature of the work that the indicators were used to assess?

Describe the way the indicators were used: initial assessment; planning; evaluation; training tool; other? Please give details.

How were the indicators completed: by an individual; by a group; what is their relationship to the work being assessed? Please give details.

How were the indicators helpful in your work?

What plans have been made/changed or what actions taken as a result of using the indicators?

What would you add (elements of an indicator or additional indicators) to make this?

What indicators did not apply to your situation?

Please add other comments that will help in evaluation and development of the indicators.

Return to:

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